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# The Quail

The Best Insect and Weed Exterminator  
Must be Better Protected



By Edward Harris

Price, 5 cents. For Sale by all Booksellers.

William Briggs, Publisher  
Toronto

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# The Quail

## THE BEST INSECT EXTERMINATOR

SHOULD BE PROTECTED FOR THE FARMER

THE history of game legislation in Ontario has been somewhat peculiar—one might say, tragic. In the 50's quail had spread over the greater part of Western Ontario. In 1853 the Great Western Railway was opened for traffic, and a demand for quail to supply the American cities soon followed. This demand increased from year to year, with better prices for the birds. In 1854-55-56 London was the centre of the quail belt, which then extended from the Detroit River to beyond Hamilton, to the Niagara Peninsula, and along the Lake Erie shore. Norfolk was one of the best of the quail counties. The farmer in those days was comparatively a poor man. It is not a matter for surprise that when he found he could pay his taxes by trapping and netting quail in the barn yard in January and February, it soon became the custom of the country. At those dates netted quail were fed and kept in large coops for sale.

### Sportsmen Take Action

The first Act for the protection of quail was passed in 1856. For this Act we were indebted to the sportsmen of Ontario. Sportsmen were very prominent in obtaining all subsequent legislation. The results, as will be seen hereafter, were not entirely satisfactory. That there was always a strong influence against them is clear, for the exportation of quail was not prohibited until 1897.

The Act of 1856 protected quail from 1st March to 1st October. The trapping, netting and export of quail increased to an extent to cause alarm, and in 1868 quail were further protected by adding January and February to the close season. Those months were clearly the best for netting, barnyard slaughter, and export.

### **Farmers vs. Sportsmen**

Competition has always been the soul of business. The rivalry between the farmers and their boys, with their nets and traps, and the town and city sports with their "two-barrel guns and smell dogs," became so keen and disastrous that in 1871 quail were fully protected for three years. That Act was repealed the following year, except in the counties of Essex, Kent, Lambton and Middlesex. In 1877 quail had increased in numbers, and were permitted to be shot. In 1886 quail were again fully protected for the years 1886-87, but in 1887 we were legislated back to the old dates. In 1890 the sale of quail was prohibited.

### **Protected at Night and on Sunday**

In 1892 shooting was prohibited between sunset and sunrise, and on the Lord's Day. Attendance at church was provided for, as well as a quiet night's rest. The sale of quail was also prohibited for two years. In 1893 exposure for sale was limited to five days. In 1897 we were once more legislated back to the old dates, and export prohibited. In 1899 quail were permitted to be sold during the hunting season and five days after. At this date, the shooting was almost wholly in the hands of the market-shooter. In 1900 we were again legislated back to the old dates. In 1902 quail were permitted to be shot in the month of November only.

### **"Battue" Next Fall**

There has been no legislation since, probably because quail had so nearly reached extinction point that city, town and village sportsmen ceased to take any interest in the matter.

But in 1903 we find in the Game Commission report a proposition to establish "quail hatcheries." And, finally, in 1904, by order-in-Council, no quail are to be shot until 1st November, 1905. At that date there is to be a grand "battue" and the quail finally exterminated, unless cancelled by the present Government.

This almost unparalleled legislation, extending back nearly half a century, has practically resulted in the extermination of quail. The reason is plain. All legislation was inspired from the same quarter, the intention being to kill rather than protect. With the advent of cheap breech-loading guns and fixed ammunition, quail were doomed. They became a luxury for the rich, and the pot-hunter thrived.

Merchants who had guns and cartridges to sell, took a conspicuous part in denouncing the destruction of game, which can only be compared to Satan rebuking sin. And now all such are looking forward to the 1st of November next for a grand "battue."

### **The First Ontario Quail**

Let us enquire what the quail is. It is not a bird of the forest, nor was it indigenous to this country. General Simcoe, our first governor, never heard of it. There were none in the country when he made his celebrated tour with Col. Talbot, Givens and Littlehales. My mother, who was born in the county of Norfolk one hundred and five years ago, told me she was about ten years of age when she heard a bird whistle "Bob White" on the farm. She asked her father what it was. He said, "I am so glad—the quail have come." He was a banished Loyalist from New Jersey, where the quail were then in plenty.

The Ontario quail crossed Lake Erie to the county of Essex from Ohio, and to the county of Norfolk from Pennsylvania. All came from Mexico, following the settlements on the Atlantic coast, becoming larger and hardier in the colder climates.

## **A Bird of the Farm**

Mr. Edwin Sandys, in his work on game birds, gives a very good account of the quail:

"Prolific to an astonishing degree, he may be depended upon to hold his own under any reasonable conditions. Hardy and strong, he thrives under conditions which few other birds can endure. His limited wanderings seldom take the original brood from their native farm unless hunted. The quail is truly a bird of the farm, and the camp follower of the strong army of agriculture, attracted by the droppings of grain and seeds, and the insects which follow the cultivation of fruit, grain and vegetables."

## **The Grain and Fruit Belt**

As the grain and fruit belt of Ontario broadened, so did the range of quail extend. He is content to watch for those lost grains which fall to him by right. A sworn foe to the foes of the farm, he hunts around the crowding stems for skulking insects, and what he and his swarming tribe fail to detect can work but little harm. The seeds of some of the most troublesome weeds are his favorite food.

Quails' stomachs have been found filled with ants and larvæ, grasshoppers, crickets, the cut worm, caterpillars, weevils, locusts, potato and other beetles, cabbage worms, turnip fly, wheat worms and midges, and many insects a torture to live stock—in fact, nearly every insect a farmer is glad to get rid of. A young quail will consume its own weight in insects every day. This is the reason why they cannot be successfully raised in captivity.

Insects pass through four stages, the eggs, the larvæ, the chrysalis, and the perfect insect. The birds, which are wholly insectivorous, and come north during the summer months to breed, destroy the perfect insect. During the autumn, winter and spring quail depend largely for food upon the eggs, larvæ and chrysalis, as well as the perfect insect, and as insect destroyers are far more effective than the migratory insectivorous birds."



### **A Bevy to a Farm**

Quail never overcrowd a farm; they go in bevy, and a new bevy seeks an adjoining farm, and so they spread over the whole of our cultivated fields. Orchards are favorite feeding grounds, but they never injure fruit, large or small. Quail are mostly monogamous, like men, only occasionally polygamous. The female hatches from thirteen to fifteen eggs—the sparrow, only five, and we know how that bird increases. The quail, if left undisturbed, will repeat her nesting twice, and occasionally three times, in a season. Any who are old enough to remember the almost miraculous increase of quail in Ontario up to the 60's will readily believe this.

### **Followed the Israelites**

The antiquity of the quail entitles the bird to some respect. The Israelites were forty years in reaching the promised land after their exodus from Egypt. On that God-inspired journey they supported themselves and their families, which became a mighty host, by cultivating the fields as they went from point to point. We have it in the Bible that quail followed them. The quail, in fact, is almost as much the companion of man as the dog, and belongs, by right of cultivation of the fields, to the farmer. The quail came up with the crop.

### **An Interesting Bird**

There is much to interest the student in the habits of this bird and his general make-up. He is absolutely fearless during the love-making season, and will act as husband to the widow of a defunct male, and assist in bringing up her family.

Although a delicious morsel as an occasional luxury, he cannot be eaten for any length of time without serious consequences to the consumer. This trait, if its consumption were localized, would be some protection for the bird, but the demand for it has been unlimited in all cities reached by rail. Unlike the domestic fowl, the quail is self-supporting and finds his own shelter. The female does not make her nest until May, when all danger from cold and wet has passed. In suit-

able runs, prepared for them, the birds will breed and prove most interesting pets. Towards the latter part of September the earlier broods become restless. This continues and becomes more pronounced, until it almost assumes the nature of a partial migration.

They then drift from place to place and are very unsettled, evidently an inherited wandering habit. It is this habit which makes the rearing of quail by clubs and enthusiastic individuals for sporting purposes a failure. It is a bird of the country, which must be free to come and go, and if properly protected would spread over the greater part of Ontario. The quail belt is by no means confined to Essex and Kent. The Canada quail was the hardiest and finest specimen of the species; in all respects a survival of the fittest; the Florida quail are not half their size and weight.

### General Protection Needed

If the quail are to be saved to us protection must now become general, by the united action of the agriculturists and the fruit growers. The question has hitherto been legislated upon and discussed from a sportsman's and epicure's point of view. It must now be considered from an insectivorous standpoint. The time for action is opportune. The sportsman cannot complain, as there are no longer sufficient birds to shoot to make the game worth the candle; unless, indeed, an order-in-Council prepares a "battue" for him. The epicure need not object, for he cannot get his "quail on toast" for love or money.

Nine hundred and ninety-nine men out of a thousand in Ontario have never tasted a quail; the number of people who have shot them for sport would probably be less. After fifty years' legislation, beginning when quail were in abundance, and ending when we had but a few scattered beves left, it is now suggested to establish a hatchery. The farms and lands which the industry of our people have cultivated are the only possible hatcheries.



### **Foes of the Quail**

In Ontario man gave the quail no rest; the bird was hunted spring and fall, summer and winter, morning, noon and night. Next to man, the deadliest foes of the quail are crusted snow, extreme cold, hawks, and domestic cats. It is said that a quail with a full crop never freezes. There is truth in it. It applies to more than quail. Driven, half-starved, from their natural shelter, hounded by dogs and sportsmen, trapped, netted, and shot in the barnyards, the quail are occasionally covered by crusted snow and perish. We had the same climate in the 60's, but the quail had increased, and were increasing abundantly, and would again if properly protected.

Two hawks only attack quail, Cooper's hawk and the sharp-shinned hawk; as they destroy chickens also, the boys shoot them. The cat which destroys quail is no longer a domestic cat, but "a ranger," destroying any bird as it leaves the nest. The usefulness of such a cat is gone.

### **Farmers Must Back the Laws**

Man, the real destroyer of quail, can be fettered by legislation, but we have seen how valueless legislation is unless the farmers and cultivators of the soil make up their minds that quail were intended for greater things than sport and table luxury. It is, indeed, a striking contrast when we regard Great Britain, with a limited rural area and a dense population, abounding in game and making indigenous the valuable game birds of other countries, while in Ontario, with a great rural area, we have been deprived even of that supply which nature gave us, a free gift.

### **English Game Laws**

In England, where the franchise very nearly approaches universal suffrage, no objection is ever taken to those laws which make it possible to protect birds. Similar laws would be in every way acceptable in Ontario. There is in England a fixed fine of \$25 for the various trespasses, and increased

penalties for second offences. The question of damage done is not left to the magistrate, as in Ontario. Verbal or written notice can also be given not to trespass. Quail are more easily protected than any other bird. They do not frequent the woods unless driven there from enclosures and the cultivated fields. If farmers and their boys could be persuaded to become their friends they would always be in sight.

The wild turkey was the most timid and wildest of all American birds. Taken to Europe by Columbus and bred in captivity, the young birds were fed and petted till they became tamer than the ordinary barn-door fowl.

All our turkeys are descended from the native wild turkey. Let an effort now be made to see what kindness may do for that most persecuted of all birds, the quail!

### **Damage Done by Sportsmen**

Many farmers complain of injury to their cattle from irresponsible shooting parties. That pernicious habit of breaking down fences and rambling over fields without the consent of the owner would be checked, were it even known that the above or similar provisions existed as part of the law of the land. Lawbreakers are very few in number; the great mass of the people obey the law. Some such effective legislation would be a boon to farmers in many tramp-inflicted localities, quite apart from the question of game protection.

### **Quail Must Not be Disturbed**

The preservation and restoration of quail and game depends largely upon the existence of laws which, if enforced, would make sure the privacy and freedom from intrusion of property where game is. Man does so much to destroy quail and game, and so little to protect those birds, that it is reasonable provision should be made to leave them undisturbed, more particularly during the nesting season. A quail nest once disturbed, the female never returns to it. It is built upon the ground in the open, cultivated fields, and still very difficult to find. The dull plumage given to the females of birds was intended to aid in their concealment when nesting.

### Quail as Insect Destroyers

The professor in agriculture, probably disciplined by timid legislators, cannot be said to have grasped this question fearlessly. He has, as a rule, left quail and game birds, as insect destroyers, severely alone. The expression, "*Oh, give the boys a chance!*" has sent many a man to Parliament and destroyed many an orchard and garden. It does not add to one's popularity to be "up against" the sports, who can flood the newspapers with emanations from their fertile brains, so in asking the "professor" for a fish he has given us a stone. That stone is poison and spraying. Spraying has now become an agricultural and horticultural household word. But spraying takes time and money and there is a growing feeling that it is not an unqualified success as a substitute for nature's own plan. Birds not only cost us nothing, but many of them are valuable weed destroyers, as well as insect destroyers.

### Saving the Orange Groves

Every insect has its parasite; these parasites are usually harmless. All perish by spraying. In California a few years ago the orange groves were being destroyed by a scale insect. After all efforts to exterminate it by spraying had failed, "lady bugs" were imported. In a very short time the scale had disappeared, the orange groves were saved. The lady bug feeds upon the eggs of all insects.

### Sanctifying the Birds

In Ontario every year smaller and more dreaded insects make their appearance, the parasites to keep them in check having been destroyed by spraying. In many cases the new insects are so diminutive that the microscope must be used to detect them; even the San Jose scale is now a "back number." It reminds one of the nursery rhyme:

"Those larger fleas have smaller fleas  
Upon their backs to bite them;  
Those smaller fleas have other fleas  
And so on—*ad infinitum!*"

Birds have played no mean part in shaping civilization. We are largely indebted to priests, and more particularly heathen priests, for saving us many of our most valuable birds. Their plan was to sanctify them. In India many valuable birds have been made sacred by the Hindus and Mahometans. In Prescott's "History of the Conquest of Mexico," there is a full description, as given by Cortez, of the incredible number of quail there (A.D. 1520). The bird had been sanctified by the Aztecs, and was a delicacy reserved for priests only.

In most countries it is considered unlucky to destroy swallows. In ancient Greece they were declared sacred. The Rhodians had a hymn to the swallow, sung by the priests. It was also believed whoever stole a swallow's egg would suffer some calamity, and so they protected their insectivorous birds.

### **No Quail in Europe**

The quail is not known in England, Ireland or Scotland, nor in any of those European countries whence we come. The value of the bird in agriculture has not been known. A general enlightenment is now required. Ignorance is not bliss in this connection.

A pamphlet, called "Canada," issued at Ottawa by authority during the great Colonial Exhibition, 1886 (page 148), has the following: "Game here is common property, and the hunter can find pecuniary profit in its pursuit."

This unwise and exaggerated statement sent us a temporary influx of "remittance men," with dogs and guns, but wholly unsuited for farm life, and in many ways otherwise objectionable.

### **A Great Dome Question**

It is not probable that we shall be able to sanctify the bird, but there are good reasons why our clergy of all denominations should assist in forming public opinion to save us not only quail, but all our insectivorous birds. It is no longer a sporting question, but a great and vital home question. No woodpecker escapes the small boy's catapult, a dead oriole,

worth fifty cents, is an irresistible investment; meadow larks with their heads off are sold as quail. These may sound like trifles, but in reality it means continuous and widespread slaughter. A city well policed knows nothing about this, but in small towns and villages there can be no check except "moral suasion." The children should be enlightened on this subject in the schools, and the teachers fully instructed how to impress children with the beauties and value of bird life.

### The Curse of Insects

Neither farmer nor fruit grower should permit a quail or any insectivorous birds to be shot upon their premises for many years to come. It is now well known and undisputed that the loss to Canada through destructive insects runs into millions of dollars yearly. The cry of "*Back to the land*" might indeed be a success were pernicious insect life once checked.

In any ordinary vegetable and fruit garden there is now an insect in everything except salsify. Even asparagus, the oldest known vegetable in the world, has its beetle, and escaping elsewhere, is for the first time attacked on this side of the Atlantic.

EDWARD HARRIS.